

## A Look in the Mirror for Supervisors, a Look from All Angles New performance feedback tool allows direct reports and peers to weigh in on the effectiveness of DLA's leaders

*By Jessica Walter, DDC Command Affairs*

Defense Distribution Center (DDC) headquarters supervisors will be among the first at DLA to complete a new leadership improvement program that will allow DDC leaders to see how effective they are—from all angles.

It's a new performance appraisal tool that gives direct reports and peers the opportunity to provide feedback on a supervisor's leadership ability.

In the new DLA/Denison Multi-Source Feedback program, each supervisor will be rated from multiple perspectives, receiving feedback from his or her direct reports, peers and immediate supervisor. The supervisors will also rate themselves.

When all the information is compiled on a secure server at Denison Consulting, the

same firm hired by DLA to perform the Culture/Climate Survey, each supervisor will receive a report that compares their self assessment with those of their raters.

"About thirty people have gone through this so far at DLA, and we have had a lot of honest feedback," said Denison Consulting Co-Founder Bill Neale. "It has been a real eye-opener for supervisors."

According to Neale, the traditional way to rate supervisors has been to use a self assessment, a practice that frequently produces inaccurate results.

Neale says the feedback from other people is the most valuable. "Without it, the supervisors cannot get an understanding of what's working, what's not, and how they can improve their effectiveness."

By May 2005, all 18 supervisors at DDC headquarters will have identified their raters and completed their self assessments. In June, the supervisors will receive the report detailing the feedback received from their employees, peers and immediate supervisors.

The on-line survey takes about 15 minutes to complete and has 96 questions that evaluate supervisors in the four key areas also used in the Culture/Climate Survey:

Mission—Setting clear priorities and goals.

Involvement—Empowering and engaging employees.

Adaptability—Creating change, looking at new and different ways of doing business, understanding the customer.

Consistency—Defining core values, achieving goals, aligning with other divisions.

To guarantee anonymity for those rating the supervisors, the data entered will be stored on a server at Denison Consulting, not at DLA.

The raters' responses on the survey will be included in the report given to the supervisors in a chart form similar to the colorful circular charts shown on the results of the Culture/Climate Survey.

In June, the DDC headquarters supervisors will meet with Neale to go over the reports and to discuss how best to use the information. "It takes a lot of courage to do this, and I've heard a lot of excuses to disregard the data," says Neale. The most popular excuses include "They just don't know me well," "I've changed since the survey was completed," and "This must be someone else's report." Neale's favorite: "The data on my strengths is accurate, but the data on my weaknesses isn't."

Although denial is common, Neale says it's important to overcome that and accept the data so change can occur. "A little bad news can be helpful because it's necessary to create an action plan."

After the supervisors receive their reports, they are required to set up a meeting with their bosses to go over their action plans of how they will improve.

In about two years, all the supervisors will go through the process again to see how well the action plans worked, how much they have improved.

As the rollout of the DLA/Denison Multi-Source Feedback program continues, supervisors at DDC's distribution centers will begin the process later this year. Within the next 18 months, all DLA supervisors will have completed the survey.

"The information you provide will be used for the development of DLA's supervisors, but they can't do it without feedback from you," emphasized Neale.



*Denison Consulting Co-founder Bill Neale explains how the survey results will be used to enhance the leadership skills of supervisors.*